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SOCIOETHICAL CHALLENGE AND ITS IMPACT ON THE BILATERAL DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF FINLAND AND THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH 1970-2014

By Heta Hurskainen

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The dialogue between the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (ELCF) was one of two long-lasting Orthodox-Lutheran bilateral dialogues that crossed country borders in Europe.¹ This dialogue commenced in 1970 and lasted until 2014. There are plans to continue the dialogue in spring 2016. Between 1970 and 2014, the dialogue survived through significant changes of its societal context. The dialogue itself included many different doctrinal and socioethical themes, which were discussed from churches' theological points of view. The aim of this article is to present an overview of this dialogue, especially its societal connections and the reasons the dialogue changed and led to the current situation.

To call the broken situation of the dialogue between the ROC and the ELCF as the end of this dialogue is a point of view that is not shared by the participant churches. In order to explain and justify this view, I will first present the ecumenical orientation of both churches in the 2000s. Second, I will present an overview of the dialogue's socioethical discussions

¹ The other dialogue is the one between the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) and the Russian Orthodox Church, which commenced in 1959. Heiko Overmeyer has studied the theme of peace in the dialogues between the EKD and the ROC and those of the Bund der Evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR (BEK) and Russian Orthodox Church in: Heiko Overmeyer. *Frieden in Spannungsfeld zwischen Theologie und Politik* Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Otto Lembeck, 2005.

from 1970 to 2011 in order to show the change that slowly took place over the decades. Third, I will present the events that took place after the 2011 discussion that led to the current situation. As a conclusion, I will explicate the contrast between the past dialogue results and the present-day ecumenical strategies of the churches and their impact on the dialogue in order to highlight the need for a new form of dialogue.

1. Ecumenical Orientation of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland

The ROC and the ELCF have different ways of coordinating their ecumenical relations. In the 2000s, the ROC launched several documents, where the ground was laid for its ecumenical actions, and elaborated its principles. The basic document on ecumenism launched by the Council of Bishops of the ROC in 2000 was the *Basic Principles of Attitude to the Non-Orthodox*.² Its message was that the Orthodox Church is the true Church of Christ, the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. In the connections with non-Orthodox confessions the primary task was said to bear “witness which will lead to the truth expressed in this Tradition.”³ Dialogue with non-Orthodox Christians should be carried out by the principle of dogmatic approach and fraternal love. In the dialogue, the ROC would not be allowed to make any dogmatic concessions or compromises in the faith. However, dialogue should not be a monologue, because “dialogue” implies participation by two sides. The special task of the dialogues should be to clarify theological language, comprehension, and interpretation. However, the document stated that “even formal similarities ... do not point to the authentic unity, since the doctrinal elements are given different interpretations in different

² *Basic Principles of Attitude to the Non-Orthodox*. Available at <https://mospat.ru/en/documents/attitude-to-the-non-orthodox/> Read 19.11.2015.

³ *Ibid.*

theological traditions.”⁴ Finally, the results of the dialogues would not be valid before they were adopted by the Orthodox Church as a whole.⁵

Another relevant document is *On the Attitude of the Orthodox Church towards the Heterodox and towards Inter-Confessional Organizations* from 2005.⁶ The tone of this document is different, although it strongly relies on the document on the attitude towards non-Orthodox from 2000. The basic difference is that the “non-Orthodox” are now named the “heterodox,” which indicates a more profound distance of non-orthodox from the Church. The document on the heterodox focused much more on morality than the one on non-Orthodox. It claimed that a big part of the Protestant world was losing its bond with the Tradition of the Holy Church and changing divine-established norms of morality and dogmatic teaching, and therefore losing its passion to resist human passions and sin.⁷ The document rejected ecumenical “branch-theory” and excluded any possibility of liturgical communion with the non-Orthodox. Cooperation with the heterodox was still allowed in helping the weak, resisting immortality, and in participating in charitable and educational programs. Dialogue with the non-Orthodox remained a necessary way to witness Orthodoxy.⁸

The third document from 2013 was called *On the External Mission of the Russian Orthodox Church Today*. The document repeated the idea of witness from the earlier documents and stated: “In the cases where our partners in dialogue embark on the path of reviewing eternal and immutable norms sealed in Holy Scriptures, dialogue loses its meaning and comes to an end.”⁹ The document put more weight on moral issues, and instead of

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ This document was signed by both the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia (ROCOR), when the two were still separated. It is thus a dialogue document that reflects the common understanding of the question. The ROC and the ROCOR were joined together in 2007.

⁷ *On the Attitude of the Orthodox Church towards the Heterodox and Towards Inter-Confessional Organizations*. Available at <http://orthodoxeurope.org/page/14/70.aspx#2> Read 19.11.2015.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ *On the external mission of the Russian Orthodox Church today*. Available at <https://mospat.ru/en/documents/o-sovremennoj-vneshnej-missii-russkoj-pravoslavnoj-cerkvi/> read 19.11.2015.

appreciating dialogue, it hinted at the limits of dialogue because of moral rather than doctrinal reasons.

The ELCF's ecumenical strategy from 2009 to 2015 was to have the ELCF believe and confess that it was part of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ. The strategy claimed, "Our church is a confessional Lutheran church which, faithful to its own tradition and confession, seeks agreement on the fundamental truths of faith with all Christians."¹⁰ Searching for unity did not mean silence about doctrinal differences. The ELCF did not aim at similarity in inter-Christian relations, but it believed that agreement on the fundamental truths of faith was needed for church unity. The strategy continued:

Our church acts constantly and determinedly by being the same church in all directions. ... Our closest contacts are with those who, like our church, represent and respect the common legacy of undivided Christendom and who hold to the classic interpretation of Christianity and sacramental ecclesiology.¹¹

Despite strong doctrinal emphasis, the ELCF saw doctrinal and ethical ecumenism belonging together: "The Golden Rule shows that one's relationship with one's neighbor cannot be separated from one's relationship with God."¹² Therefore, the ELCF saw that socioethical activities and provoking discussion were not just the church's right but its obligation arising from its self-understanding. The objective of ecumenism was full unity. According to the strategy, this objective meant that "growth in ecumenical attitudes will at the same time renew our own church."¹³

The ecumenical attitude of the ROC and the ELCF were outlined in these documents, which showed the differing approach to the dialogue before it ended. The ROC's position towards dialogue with Protestant churches included the idea of witness and growing weight

¹⁰ *Our Church – A Community in Search of Unity*, 18. Available at [http://sakasti.evl.fi/julkaisut.nsf/00bfcbeb3ee07bf7c225730800273b7d/4a3d3d95513bb40cc2257e2e0012d4a2/\\$FILE/Ecumenical%20Strategy%20Complete%20Book.pdf](http://sakasti.evl.fi/julkaisut.nsf/00bfcbeb3ee07bf7c225730800273b7d/4a3d3d95513bb40cc2257e2e0012d4a2/$FILE/Ecumenical%20Strategy%20Complete%20Book.pdf) Read 30.11.2015.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹² *Ibid.*, 21.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 29

on (moral) norms instead of theology. The ELCF instead emphasized its ecumenical attitude, and reciprocity of doctrine and ethics, as well as the effect of ecumenism on the ELCF.

2. Concern of World Politics and Churches' Response (1970–1989)

Before the official theological dialogue started, there was some contact between the ROC and the ELCF. These contacts consisted mainly of visits by high-ranking delegations. Traditionally, the impulse to start the dialogue has had its origins in the reception of Patriarch Alexy I of Moscow in 1967. There, the Finnish Archbishop Martti Simojoki proposed starting an official dialogue that would be based on not only the delegation's visits but also the discussion about the doctrines of the two churches. The approval to start the negotiations came later from Metropolitan Nikodim, the then chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate Department for External Church Relations.¹⁴ The bilateral theological dialogue between the ROC and The ELCF started in 1970 and continued until 2014.

The dialogue partners arranged the socioethical theses so that they first offered a theological basis for the topic discussed, and at the end of the theses, the group gave some examples of how the principles could be used in the political or societal situations of the time. My focus is on these practical theses in order to show how churches coming from different societal situations were able to observe the prevailing situation together and how this approach changed over the decades.

¹⁴ Hans-Olof Kvist 'Die Bedeutung der Friedensproblematik in Dialog zwischen der Russischen Orthodoxen Kirche und der Evangelischen Kirche Finnlands', *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte* 4 Göttingen: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 1991 241–249. Kvist's article is about the peace theme of the dialogue. His article gives good background knowledge on the process of how the theses have been prepared and also information on the relevance of the peace theme for the churches. See Riho Saard, *Suurenmoinen rakkaiden näytelmä. Suomen evankelis-luterilaisen ja Venäjän ortodoksisen kirkon oppineuvottelut kylmän sodan vuosina* (Tallin: Argo, 2006), 210–211. Saard's church-historical study covers the first steps of the negotiations. Even though he says in the introduction that he wants to find out whether the Finnish Church had taken part in "Finlandization" in the negotiations' final documents, that is, communiqués and theses, and outside these documents (Saard, 2006), 15), he refers to the final documents only three times. Cf. R. Saard, 106, 111, 130.

The first dialogue round was held in Turku in 1970 and the second in 1971 in Zagorsk. The churches underlined how in the history of humankind, the question of war and peace had never been as difficult as it was then. This can be interpreted as the churches' sincere concern for the world. The churches emphasized twice that they could not see how the balance of power built on the "balance of terror" created by nuclear weapons could bring about lasting peace.¹⁵ In 1971, they said that lasting peace among nations cannot be built upon imperialistic striving for benefits.¹⁶ Here, the churches used a very one-sided statement, which was known from the then prevailing political language as an anti-West statement. This was not what the ELCF wanted to indicate by the "imperial striving for benefits," as it originally referred to the Roman Empire,¹⁷ but the theses definitely had Cold War-related political connotations.

As a conclusion of their theological deliberation, the churches announced that Christians have to strive together against all forms of discrimination and the churches need to support and take part in research on peace and conflict. They noted that churches have to try to support social and economic renewal in the world and social structures have to be formed so that they can advance the cooperation of people.¹⁸ Here, one can perceive how the dialogue has used the solutions of the multilateral ecumenical movement when describing societal evil. The focus was on preventive activities such as development aid, although one can assume that this kind of help was possible only for the Finnish side.

From the beginning of the dialogue, it is thus possible to separate three different reasons to talk about acute socioethical themes. Those reasons were Christians' sincere concern, politics, and multilateral ecumenical work. Sincere concern stemmed from the Christian basic

¹⁵ 'Turku 1970' and 'Zagorsk 1971' in *Dialogue Between Neighbours. The Theological Conversation between the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church 1970–1986. Communiqués and Theses*. (Helsinki: Publications of Luther-Agricola Society, 1986), 44, 53.

¹⁶ 'Zagorsk 1971', 53.

¹⁷ See Kauko Pirinen 'Zagorskin keskustelut oikeudenmukaisuudesta ja väkivallasta' in *Näköala* 1/1972. 2–6.

¹⁸ 'Turku 1970', 45; 'Zagorsk 1971', 53.

ideal of peaceful coexistence within creation. Political reason came from the Cold War situation and Eastern and Western ways to build contacts over the Iron Curtain. Multilateral ecumenical work, especially that of the World Council of Churches (WCC), was familiar to both of the churches, so they used language and expressions from these familiar ecumenical contacts and showed appreciation on the work of the WCC.

Even though the bilateral dialogue between the ELCF and the ROC had its own inner logic, it was true that the practical statements of the dialogue quite often followed the multilateral ecumenical discussion. In fact, the churches said in 1977:

...the participation of Christian in the development of détente and international cooperation is most usefully carried out through the national, territorial and international Christian organizations which devote themselves to the work of peace, as for instance, the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Conference of European Churches (CEC), which are ecumenical organizations common to our churches.¹⁹

The statement provided the key to understanding the Finnish-Russian dialogue's theses concerning the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), which was mentioned in four different discussion rounds from 1971 until 1980. A wish was expressed in the Finnish-Russian dialogue in 1971 for the conference to be held in Helsinki, according to the offer previously made by the Finnish government. The same wish was articulated already in the Conference of European Churches (CEC)'s assembly in 1967.²⁰ In 1974, the churches articulated that they hope and pray that the conference, which already had begun, would guarantee a positive development towards decreasing tension in Europe and in the world. The third time (Kiev 1977), the churches expressed their gladness at the signing of the Final Act of Helsinki in 1975 and expressed the firm hope that the international détente and cooperation

¹⁹ 'Kiev 1977' in *Dialogue Between Neighbours. The Theological Conversation between the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church 1970–1986. Communiqués and Theses.* (Helsinki: Publications of Luther-Agricola Society, 1986), 80. It was said that the churches are aware of the work of organizations like Christian Peace Conference and Pax Christi. Thesis 2. The WCC and the CEC are mentioned in this sense already in Järvenpää 1974. 'Järvenpää 1974' in *Dialogue Between Neighbours*, 61.

²⁰ Werner Krusche 'Servants of God, Servants of Men' in *the Ecumenical Review*, Vol.23, No. 3. 1971, 205–221. Irja Askola 'Kommenttipuheenvuoro. Sosiaalietnistien teemojen arviointia ekumeenisen liikkeen näkökulmasta.' in *Reseptio* 2/2002, 47–50.

would lead to concrete measures in the field of disarmament. For the last time, in 1980, the conference was mentioned by the churches' hope that the governments would stop the continuing race for arming and create a confident atmosphere in the spirit of the final document signed in Helsinki.²¹

The dialogue theses referred to human rights and disarmament alongside the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. This was actually quite natural when seen in the light of the work of the WCC and the CEC—in which both the Finnish Lutheran Church and the ROC took part. The CEC followed it closely and it was already on the ecumenical agenda elsewhere. Multilateral ecumenism referred, for example, to the so-called “third basket” of humanitarian issues in the Helsinki Accords.²² Additionally, the dialogue spoke about human rights, and this was possibly the reason that in a thesis from 1977, it was said that “We have to ensure that merely taking advantage of any separate point of the Helsinki Agreement does not harm détente and cooperation.”²³ A critical voice one heard here might have been related to state politics and how human rights should have been used.²⁴

In 1983, the churches explicitly mentioned the ceased détente and the following growing mistrust between superpowers.²⁵ The most practical statements from Leningrad 1983 and Mikkeli 1986 concerned the idea of creating nuclear-free zones, particularly in Northern Europe.²⁶ Statements like this most likely had their origin in the national interests of state foreign politics. Shortly after the theses of Mikkeli 1986 were accepted, the Finnish delegates

²¹ ‘Zagorsk 1971’, 53. ‘Järvenpää 1974’, 61. ‘Kiev 1977’, 79. ‘Turku 1980’ in *Dialogue Between Neighbours*, 91.

²² Peter Lodberg ‘Justice and Peace in a World of Chaos’ in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2004), 323–344.

²³ ‘Kiev 1977’, 80.

²⁴ See Keith Clements & Todor Sabev ‘Europe’ in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement*, 533–564. In Saard’s study, the question of the CSCE is analyzed as a question of state politics. He is aware that the question was also in view in the multilateral ecumenical relations, but he does not pay attention to this in his analysis. Under the title 2.3.4. Venäjän Ortodoksisen kirkon tavoitteet. (The Aims of the Russian Orthodox Church [for the dialogue]), Saard tries to prove how the CSCE became an aim of the Russians. Saard, 89–96. In doing so, it is left somewhat unclear whether he speaks about the church’s or the state’s aims here.

²⁵ ‘Leningrad 1983’ *Dialogue Between Neighbours*, 101.

²⁶ ‘Leningrad 1983’, 103; ‘Mikkeli 1986’, *Dialogue Between Neighbours*, 114.

discovered a paragraph therein where it indicated the 2000th anniversary of the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, a festival of reconciliation and peace, actually had its origin in Mikhail Gorbachev's slogan Star Peace and in his plans for a nuclear-free world by the year 2000. The Finns did not regard this as problematic, having nothing against those principles.²⁷ As the Nordic nuclear-free zone was a more territorial topic than the CSCE, multilateral ecumenism was not seen to have a role for securing or monitoring this beneficial political wish.

By the discussion round in Pyhtitsa 1989, it became clear that the political and societal situation had changed. In the Communiqué, the churches noted that the negotiation was held at the time when the Soviet Union was undergoing a significant positive societal renewal.²⁸ The theses themselves did not comment on the changing situation, but the fact that the churches discussed man's responsibility to God's creations showed how the focus was no more only on the question of peace or on the tension between the East and West. Even though the official documents of the dialogue were quite economical in their manner of describing the surrounding society, the leader of the Russian delegation, Metropolitan Alexy, referred many times to the new political situation and the changes it had carried out.²⁹ In the theses, the churches expressed their care not only for environmental issues but also for questions of nuclear war and the demands of continuing economic growth. Their proposals to work

²⁷ Juha Pihkala, 'Mikkelin neuvottelujen yleinen arviointi' unpublished available in Helsinki: Archives of the Foreign Office of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. 17.11.1986, 5pp. The Thesis was formulated as follows: "The churches consider their special task as being to maintain faith in the meaningfulness of and opportunities for working for peace as this millennium draws to an end, and hope that our world will be prepared to celebrate the 2000th anniversary of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ as a festival of reconciliation and peace." 'Mikkeli 1986', 114. Thesis 9. The original proposal by the Russian delegation was drafted as follows: "Furthermore the churches wish that heaven and earth would receive the Jubilee of the Nativity of Christ, which will be held in year 2000, as a celebration of peace, chastity and holiness." (Translation by the author). About Gorbachev's plans see e.g. Vladislav Zubok *A Failed Empire. The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 285.

²⁸ 'Pyhtitsa 1989' in *Creation: The Eighth Theological Conversations between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church. Pyhtitsa and Leningrad 9th-19th 1989*. (Helsinki: Documents of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland 3.), 18.

²⁹ Hannu T. Kamppuri 'Pühtitsa 1989' in *Teologinen Aikakauskirja* vol. 95, 1990, 46-54..

against the threats were same as earlier: to support governments in the disarmament process and to call for international legislation and commitments.³⁰

A change in the way of formulating concrete socioethical issues in the dialogue had taken place from 1970 until 1989. The prevailing political situation was discussed throughout the whole period, but the issues to which the churches referred were changed from global concern of peace towards more territorial concern of peace. At the end of this period, the concern became even more local, and the ROC representatives emphasized the Soviet Union's new political situation in which the ELCF did not take any stand. The churches commonly emphasized the global disarmament processes. This change was also reflected in the sincere concern for Christians expressed in the political processes. The concern regarding the general principle of peace stayed similar through the time period, but when it came to the question of political changes in the Soviet Union, the ELCF stayed quiet. The reason for this was that according to the ELCF, they did not believe that they had a right to comment on the political reformation of an independent state. The question was local and out of the scope of a bilateral ecumenical dialogue. Additionally, the way to refer to the multilateral ecumenism changed. On global concern, the churches relied on the work of the CEC and the WCC. The more local the questions, the more specific they were, and less was the input from the global ecumenism that was expected or was possible. Wide consensus on social ethics, which was approached through the theme of peace, covered the churches' concern. A common ecumenical way to approach it in multilateral connections and a common understanding of acceptable political way to react seemed to perish gradually.

³⁰ 'Pyhtitsa 1989', 26.

3. Building Church-State Relations in the 1990s

For the ROC, the new societal openness in Russia after the Soviet Union allowed the possibility of discussing questions of faith in society without muting the message of the Church. However, in the dialogue in Järvenpää 1992, Church-State relations were not acute in the sense that the ELCF delegates had expected. Moreover, the themes of this dialogue were very much focused on doctrinal questions of apostolicity.³¹

The tune of the dialogue changed, when the next discussion round, hosted by the ROC, was held in Kiev, Ukraine, in 1995. In Kiev, questions regarding the relationships between mission and culture, mission and nation, canonical borders, freedom of religion, and human rights were discussed. The Orthodox delegate emphasized the inner mission among Orthodox countries and nations that had been orthodox. The outer mission—meaning the mission outside the canonical boundaries of the Church—did not play such an important role. The relationship between mission and culture seemed to focus on cultures with Christian roots. The argument was that missions should renew local cultures that were not in contradiction with the Christian faith and should make them an instrument of salvation.³² The inner mission manifested in the unity among those who truly should belong to the Orthodox Church. Belonging to the Church was not based on a personal relation with God; instead, the criteria—nation or historical fact—of belonging were temporal. The position of the Russian delegation very much reflected the inner Orthodox situation of Ukraine—which had belonged to the ROC's territory but was now facing multiplicity in the form of another non-canonical

³¹ Järvenpää 1992. *The Ninth Theological Discussions between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church*. (Helsinki: Documents of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland 5, 1993).

³² Ioann 'Ortodoksinen käsitys kirkon lähetystyöstä: Ekklesiologiset ja kanoniset perustelut' 8pp unpublished available in Helsinki: Archives of the Foreign Office of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. 1995.2,5. See Heta Hurskainen *Ecumenical Social Ethics as the World Changed. Socio-Ethical Discussion in the Ecumenical Dialogue between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland 1970–2008*. Turku: Schriften der Luther-Agricola-Gesellschaft 67. 297–299.

Orthodox Church.³³ However, in the dialogue, both the ROC and the ELCF recognized freedom of religion as having two sides: freedom in Christ—in relation to which different views of mission existed—and freedom of religion, which was recognized as a societal principle enabling respect for everyone despite their religious affiliation.³⁴

The context of the dialogue round in Lappeenranta 1998 was the changed social situation in Church-State relations. For the ELCF, this meant rephrasing questions to align with the process of European unification, in which Finland joining the European Union in 1995 was a milestone.³⁵ For the ROC, the new situation was born when *The Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations* was accepted in Russia in 1997.³⁶

Both delegations emphasized that freedom of religion involved protecting the outer freedom of the Church. In this light, it was understood as a law that had influence in the world and that society needed to guarantee.

The dialogue round in Lappeenranta was more practically oriented than ever before. Its questions arose from the changing relations between the church and the state, and even more than in Kiev 1995, the delegations continued to explain the current situation to each other instead of jointly building something doctrinally new. Because the question of Church-State relations was acute for both Churches, it marked the lectures of both delegations:

³³ The non-canonical Kievan Patriarchate had been established just three years earlier. Consequently, metropolitan Vladimir replaced Filaret as the Metropolitan of Kiev and Ukraine. Filaret instead became patriarch of the Kievan Patriarchate in 1995. See Nathaniel Davis, *A Long Walk to Church: A Contemporary History of the Russian Orthodox Church*. (Boulder: Westview Press 2003), 102–104.

³⁴ Hurskainen, 313–314.

³⁵ In 1993, the law concerning the ELCF was already divided into law and Church order. The law came to include mainly issues concerning the relation between the ELCF and the state, the constitution of the Church and its administration, the order of enactment of the law concerning the ELCF, and linguistic issues. The Church order included doctrinal and spiritual subjects confirming the ELCF's authority in issues stemming from its own confession. Concerning the wider European context, the basic principle was the idea of the positive interpretation of the freedom of religion. Leena Sorsa, *Kansankirkko, uskonnonvapaus ja valtio. Suomen evankelis-luterilaisen kirkon kirkolliskokouksen tulkinta uskonnonvapaudesta 1963–2003* (Tampere: Kirkon tutkimuskeskuksen julkaisuja 109. 2010), 218–224, 243–246.

³⁶ For more on the law's process of origin, see Zoe Knox, *Russian Society and the Orthodox Church. Religion in Russia after Communism* (London: BASEES/ Routledge Curzon series on Russian and Eastern European studies 13, 2005), 115–119; Kimmo Kääriäinen, *Ateismin jälkeen. Uskonnollisuus Venäjällä* (Tampere: Kirkon tutkimuskeskuksen julkaisuja 86, 2004), 69–76.

Efforts are being made in Finland as well as in Russia to find the optimal way of arranging church-state relations. In developing these relations, it is necessary to take into account the established cultural, religious, and social realities in each country, and it is likewise necessary to harmonize relations between the majority churches and the various religious minorities, relations between believers and unbelievers, and relations between various ethnic and cultural groups. This requires the development of national legislation and administrative procedures concerning religious life. The churches must actively participate in this process.³⁷

The theses embodied well the changing way to react to socioethical issues in the dialogue. The themes which the churches discussed were more closely linked with the specific situation in the churches' own countries, and the topical issues the churches faced in their countries. The theses still included aspects and views that were common for both the churches. At the same time, however, the theses recognized the differences in culture, religion, and social realities and accepted those differences. The socioethical issues they talked about touched the churches' essence and ways to act in the world perhaps more profoundly than the issue of peace, because in these new issues of mission and its connection with nationality, freedom of the church, and Church-State relations, the churches were able to also have differing solutions. Peace was never a theological problem between the churches.

Political situation was the reason to choose the new themes for discussion. The churches' new situations in their own countries needed to be reflected and shared with other churches. It was also the churches' sincere concern to take care of the churches and their members' rights in the new situation and keep the issues of freedom of religion and Church-State relations in view.

The biggest change took place—or continued to change from the 1989 situation—in the field of reliance on multilateral ecumenical work. It was quite evident that the WCC and the CEC no longer provided the template for the dialogue as they had in earlier decades.

³⁷ 'Lappeenranta 1998' in *Lappeenranta 1998 and Moscow 2002. The Eleventh and Twelfth Theological Discussions between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church*. (Helsinki Documents of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland 11, 2011) available in [http://sakasti.ev1.fi/sakasti.nsf/0/215E302C60D9F6FAC225773000452F61/\\$FILE/lappeenrantamoscow.pdf](http://sakasti.ev1.fi/sakasti.nsf/0/215E302C60D9F6FAC225773000452F61/$FILE/lappeenrantamoscow.pdf) Read 30.11.2015, 24.

Socioethical statements during the decade only once referred to the work of the CEC. In the theses, the churches emphasized their role sharing their Church-State experiences.³⁸ Thus, it can be said that the dialogue, which had originally aligned itself with broader ecumenical ways of handling socioethical issues, almost vanished from ROC-ELCF dialogue in the 1990s. Socioethical questions were handled on a regional rather than global level, and therefore, the WCC and the CEC as transnational organizations offered no relevant forum of reference.

4. Values and Discussion Based on Them (2002–2011)

To understand the latest phase of the dialogue between the ELCF and the ROC, one has to take a deeper look at the essence of “The Bases of the Social Concept.” It was launched at the same Episcopal Council (2000) as the “Basic Principles of Attitude to the Non-Orthodox.” Vsevolod Chaplin, who acted as a secretary of the synodal task force preparing the document, wrote that the Social Concept codified the position of the church on social issues. According to him, it was necessary for the Church to define its stand on the fundamental issues of political and social life as a basis for future concrete documents and decisions. The author also believed that the document would prove beneficial for contacts with other Christian denominations. At the same time, he admitted that the position the document expressed was radically different from that of Western Churches and confessions.³⁹ The document definitely raised discussion within the dialogues the ROC had carried out previously.⁴⁰ Additionally, the delegates of the ELCF became acquainted with the document in their own preparatory

³⁸ ‘Lappeenranta 1998’, 25.

³⁹ Vsevolod Chaplin, ‘Remaining Oneself in a Changing World. The Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church’ in *the Ecumenical Review* vol. 54 no. 1, 2002, 113,129. The paper published in the *Ecumenical Review* is for the greater part identical with the one Chaplin presented in the Finnish-Russian Dialogue in Moscow 2002.

⁴⁰ The Social Concept was discussed in the dialogue between the ROC and the EKD in the Bad Urach III in 2002.

meeting before the first dialogue round after the launching of the Social Concept in the dialogue round in Moscow in 2002.⁴¹ Because the Moscow discussion had been planned for the evaluation of the whole dialogue series, neither the Social Concept nor other new themes were discussed. The dialogue round however, included informational presentations on the current situation of both churches in their home countries. The ROC gave also a presentation on its relations to WCC, which were critically evaluated in the ROC at that time.⁴²

Three years later, in Turku in 2005, the situation was completely different. In the meeting, the churches focused their discussion on the theological bases of social ethics. Russian delegates referred to the Social Concept in their papers. It is noteworthy that within the Russian delegation, there were slightly different ways to use the Social Concept. Father Šhmalij saw the document as a tool to handle the difficult realities of social life in a conceptual manner rather than as the church's final conclusion on social questions, whereas Bishop Hilarion seemed to follow the document more categorically, especially in the questions of specific instructions given for people's lives.⁴³ The way to present the Social

⁴¹ Pauliina Arola, *Venäjän Ortodoksisen kirkon sosiaalietiikka. Venäjän ortodoksisen kirkon uudet asiakirjat/Venäläisneuvotteluiden arviointiseminaari* unpublished available in Archives of the Foreign Office of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. 19.10.2001 6pp.

⁴² Hilarion *Venäjän ortodoksikirkon kristittyjen väliset suhteet 1900-luvun ja 2000-luvun vaihteessa* unpublished available in Archives of the Foreign Office of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. 2002, 11pp. On the Orthodox participation in the WCC, see Elina Hellqvist *The Church and its Boundaries. A Study of the Special Commission on the Participation in the World Council of Churches*. Helsinki:Schriften der Luther-Agricola-Gesellschaft 65.

⁴³ Vladimir Šhmalij 'Social Ethics in the Context of Theology and Philosophy of Religion' in *Sinappi, St. Petersburg and Siikaniemi. The 13th, 14th and 15th theological discussions between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church*. Helsinki: Documents of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland 13, 2013), available in [http://sakasti.evl.fi/sakasti.nsf/0/DFDF3E405064A950C2257B080040C1B3/\\$FILE/KKH_venalaisneuvottelut_2013_verkko.pdf](http://sakasti.evl.fi/sakasti.nsf/0/DFDF3E405064A950C2257B080040C1B3/$FILE/KKH_venalaisneuvottelut_2013_verkko.pdf) Read 30.11.2015, 101–115.; Hilarion, 'Europe at the Crossroads: Spiritual and Ethical Perspectives of the Juxtaposition of Christianity and Secularism' in *ibid.*, 133-, where he discusses, for example, marriage, sexual ethics, euthanasia, and abortion. Konstantin Kostjuk, 'Die Sozialdoktrin der Russischen-Orthodoxen Kirche: Schritt zur Zivilgesellschaft oder Manifest des Orthodoxen Konservatismus' in *Die Grundlagen der Sozialdoktrin der Russischen-Orthodoxen Kirche. Deutsche Übersetzung mit Einführung und Kommentar* (Sankt Augustin: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2001), 174–196, has in his German commentary on the Bases of the Social concept distinguished three theological groups within the ROC during 1988–2000. According to him, the Social Concept represents the moderate conservative group, which represents the official church. The group criticizes the Western idea of freedom and liberalism but at the same time considers social ethics to be an especially important part of the Christian message. Kostjuk, 183–186. See also Aromaa & Saarinen, 'In Search of Sobornost and 'New Symphony': The Social Doctrine of the Russian Orthodox Church'

Concept was marked by witnesses and thus followed the guideline sketched in the “Basic Principles in the Attitude towards the Non-Orthodox.”

The theses of the discussion round stressed the concept of unity in love between God and the human being and among people. The unity was destroyed by sin but it was repaired in Christ. In the Church, the Holy Spirit unifies the members of the Church in Christ and each other in love. The demand of love is uncompromising and concerns everyone.⁴⁴ The Orthodox idea herein can be interpreted with the help of the Social Concept. The Church was described as a divine-human organism, which makes possible the grace-giving transformation of the world in history in the *synergy*⁴⁵ of the members and the Head of the church body. The world was seen as an object of God’s love, for it is to be transformed on the principles of God-commanded love.⁴⁶

What was more interesting was how the two churches were able to find common expressions for their concern for European values. Whereas Bishop Hilarion followed the Social Concept in his presentation and gave very strict ethical instructions, the theses remained on a more conceptual level. They spoke about the Church’s mission to teach people to make right choices. The theses reached the most concrete level when speaking about family and marriage. There, it was said that marriage between man and woman has a theological and spiritual meaning and calling.⁴⁷ The churches expressed their concerns by firstly giving a theological basis for their socioethical arguments, and secondly stating what processes and actions they wanted to encourage, because they saw in the processes the spirit of the said theological principles. This way, the theological bases the dialogue expressed for

in *the Ecumenical Review* vol 54 no. 1, 2002, 130–141. Using Kostjuk’s category, both Šmalij and Hilarion still fit in the above mentioned group despite their different approaches.

⁴⁴ ‘Turku 2005’ *Sinappi, St. Petersburg and Siikaniemi*, 20.

⁴⁵ “Creative co-work” The Basis of the Social Concept available in <https://mospat.ru/en/documents/social-concepts/read> 30.11.2015. I.2.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, I.2; I.3.

⁴⁷ ‘Turku 2005’, 22–23.

social ethics, as well as the Social Concept's viewpoints, where the common understanding was reflected, and used for the benefit of the dialogue.

The following discussion round was held in St. Petersburg in 2008. It showed how the ROC went one step further in defining its own position in socioethical questions. Now what Chaplin in his article predicted had come true: the Social Concept—where Human Rights were given space mainly in Chapter IV *Christian Ethics and Secular Law*—was used as a basis for a more specified statement, *The Russian Orthodox Church's Basic Teaching on Human Dignity, Freedom and Rights*. The theme of human rights was studied in-depth in the dialogue. Like earlier with the Social Concept, the Human Right document did not only give an example of the theological work of the ROC but also set a challenge for the dialogue by specifying the church's interpretation of the topic. At the beginning of the discussion, the dialogue partners' understandings of the bases of human right thinking seemed to be far away from each other.⁴⁸ The churches faced difficulties especially in the question of freedom and how it was related to the dignity of the human person rooted in creation. The difficult question, as to whether human dignity was unchangeable (ELCF) or not (ROC) was not solved in the theses.⁴⁹ Nonetheless, the dialogue did not run into a dead end here but admitted that the discussion on human dignity must continue. The theses emphasized the mutual understanding achieved on the question of human rights and obligations, where they could lean on earlier achievements and stress that every person was called to work in the world according to love and charity.⁵⁰

Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, the dialogue round in Siikaniemi 2011 focused on ecclesiology as well as the practical or sociological approach to church membership.

⁴⁸ Tomi Karttunen, 'Vapaus lahjana ja vastuuna' in *Reseptio* 1/2008, 3.

⁴⁹ Jaana Hallamaa, 'Human Rights in Light of Christianity' in *Sinappi, St. Petersburg and Siikaniemi. The 13th, 14th and 15th theological discussions between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church*. (Helsinki: Documents of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland 13, 2013), 213–235. Vsevolod Chaplin, 'The Russian Orthodox Church and Human Rights' in *Sinappi, St. Petersburg and Siikaniemi*, 200–212.

⁵⁰ 'St. Petersburg 2008', 10–11. *Sinappi, St. Petersburg and Siikaniemi.*, 162–163.

Metropolitan Hilarion's opening address, sent from Moscow to delegations of Siikaniemi 2011, and his concerns about the "christophobic attitude" towards Christians in the questions of abortion and legalizing same-sex marriage, were not discussed. Neither were they mentioned in a communiqué, which briefly referred to the content of the opening speeches.⁵¹ The themes discussed did not touch upon the questions of anthropology or Church-State relations. Only one thesis spoke about these relations by saying that Christianity was the basic element of European culture and society.⁵² The rest of the socioethical theses described the relationship between Christian identity and the Church. One gets an impression that both delegations were ecumenically open and ready to discuss the very doctrinal theme of ecclesiology. The practical theses were honest in the way they admitted to the challenges that both churches have faced in attaining more active churchgoers.⁵³ Thus, this dialogue round was different from previous ones and indicated a new interest in doctrinal discussion, where socioethical issues would not have such a distinctive role as they have had from 1995 onwards.

The three markers of the socioethical discussion, Christians' sincere concern, politics, and multilateral ecumenical work, again found new place in the socioethical discussion. The political situation did not give rise to any specific or acute concerns on which the churches should have reacted. Instead, the churches wanted to be active themselves and they expressed their willingness to be a part of creating European values, which stemmed also from Christian bases. Christians' sincere concern was probably not at the core of this, but the churches must define what Christian anthropology was, because values, which the churches wanted to highlight, were reflected in and stemmed from the Churches' teaching of human beings. Despite the ROCs critical presentation of its relations with the WCC, the dialogue rounds did

⁵¹Tomi Karttunen, *Suomen evankelis-luterilaisen kirkon ja Venäjän ortodoksisen kirkon teologisen dialogin (1970-) keskeytyminen syksyllä 2014 – arvio ja toimenpide-ehdotukset*. Unpublished available in Helsinki: Archives of the Foreign Office of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland 20.2.2015, 2; 'Siikaniemi 2011', *Sinappi, St. Petersburg and Siikaniemi.*, 278–281. Hilarion did not participate in the Siikaniemi dialogue round.

⁵² 'Siikaniemi 2011,' 280.

⁵³ 'Siikaniemi 2011,' 278–281.

not speak about multilateral ecumenism—exactly because of the ROC’s stance. It seemed that the dialogue partners wanted to keep the bilateral dialogue separated from the multilateral ones in order to keep the dialogue away from the criticism of the Orthodox participation in the ecumenical movement. However, the churches’ need to define their anthropology was linked to their doctrinal self-understanding and so different from each other and so differently weighted that such a deep common view was not perhaps possible to formulate, as was the case when peace was discussed. This was then reflected in the distance from multilateral ecumenism, which had earlier offered a more common and wide platform to work towards repairing those issues, leading to common sincere concern.

5. End of the Dialogue (2014)

The dialogue should have continued in 2014, but instead it broke down. According to the Finnish side, the main reason why this dialogue round was cancelled was because the ROC wanted the ELCF to react more negatively to homosexuality and condemn it as a sin. According to the Russian side, the disruption in the dialogue was because the Finnish Lutherans were unprepared to discuss anthropological and sexual-ethical issues theologically. At first glance, it seems that the dialogue ended because of internal disagreement about sin and theology.

The preparation for the dialogue that should have been held in 2014 started, somewhat surprisingly, in June 2012. At that time, three Finnish bishops travelled to Moscow to invite Patriarch Kirill to Finland. They were Lutheran Archbishop Mäkinen, Archbishop Leo from the Orthodox Church of Finland, and Bishop Teemu Sippo from the Catholic Church in Finland. During the visit to Moscow, the ROC expressed a desire for the Lutheran Church of

Finland to clarify its practice of prayer for same-sex unions.⁵⁴ This clarification would determine the continuity of the ecumenical dialogue between these two Churches. This also launched the preparations for the upcoming dialogue round. The preparations were strongly connected with moral issues, as it was agreed that the themes would be *Christian teachings on human beings*, with the subtitles being *Christian understanding of marriage* and *Christian upbringing at home*. However, it was agreed that the approach would include not only a moral angle but also a positive theological viewpoint on the union between God and human beings.⁵⁵

Usually, dialogue partners prepared a communiqué and theses in the dialogue, to show what was possible to state together about the commonly chosen theme. In the preparation process of the dialogue round of 2014, the ROC wanted to prepare common declaration beforehand so that it could be accepted in the dialogue or after the dialogue when the Patriarch would come to Finland. The document would show that the Patriarch was coming to Christian society.⁵⁶ The Finnish side did not favor this kind of an approach, although at one point, it was ready to deepen the preparation process and had prepared a collection of theses on the chosen anthropological theme, which it never sent to the ROC.⁵⁷ Because the ROC did not receive, from its point of view, proper preparation material from the ECLF, it decided to make its own draft version and presented it to the Finns.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Same-sex couples has been allowed to register their partnership in Finland from 1st of March 2002 according to Law of Finland. <http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/ajantasa/2001/20010950>. Read 26.8.2015. The Council of Bishops of the ELCF has given pastoral instructions for informal prayer with people, who have registered their partnership and for them on 10th of November 2010. [http://sakasti.ev1.fi/sakasti.nsf/0/F359F1ED9F897DD0C225770E0034026E/\\$FILE/PASTORAALINEN-OHJE.pdf](http://sakasti.ev1.fi/sakasti.nsf/0/F359F1ED9F897DD0C225770E0034026E/$FILE/PASTORAALINEN-OHJE.pdf) Read 26.8.2015. The ELCF does not officiate same-sex marriage.

⁵⁵ Report made by Tomi Karttunen *Valmistelukokous vuoden 2014 oppikeskusteluista Venäjän ortodoksisen kirkon kanssa* unpublished, available in Helsinki: Archives of the Foreign Office of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. 22.8.2013.

⁵⁶ Seppo Häkkinen, *Raportti matkasta Moskovaan 20.-23.3.2014* unpublished available in Helsinki: Archives of the Foreign Office of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland.

⁵⁷ Karttunen 20.2.2015.

⁵⁸ Report made by Tomi Karttunen, *Valmistelutyöryhmän tapaaminen Espoossa* unpublished available in Helsinki: Archives of the Foreign Office of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. 25.6.2014.

The reasoning used in the ROC's draft can be roughly divided into two parts. The first part covered theological reasoning for human beings and communion lived through marriage. The second part covered human beings' sexuality and its biological and sociocultural basis. The biological basis was through Biblical references firmly connected with marriage. Sociocultural changes were seen in contradiction with Christian moral norms; therefore, the document declared the following:

We, representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Evangelical Lutheran church of Finland, jointly declare that we recognize as Christian marriage only the union of a man with a woman and that we reject as impossible the equating of 'same-sex unions' with church marriage."⁵⁹

The ELCF did not accept this declaration nor did the ROC accept the reformulation: "In the traditions of our churches we recognize as Christian marriage the union of one man and one woman. Our liturgical practices don't recognize 'same-sex unions' as a Christian marriage."⁶⁰ According to the evaluation done within the ELCF, the problems with the draft culminated in the naming of homosexuality as a sin and a sickness.⁶¹

At this point, Finnish Archbishop Mäkinen saw the risk that the "dialogue does not fit to the purpose, in which our church has named our delegation." Therefore, Mäkinen proposed that instead of having a dialogue round, he would visit Moscow to talk with Hilarion about the nature and objectives of the dialogue. A positive answer to the changed plans came at the end of July from Moscow.⁶² The delegation of the archbishop visited Moscow in September 2014. The discussion concluded with the ROC being unable to see any possibility of continuing the ecumenical dialogue.⁶³ According to the Finns, the Russian side wanted the

⁵⁹ *Draft statement by the participants of the dialogue between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland*. unpublished available in Helsinki: Archives of the Foreign Office of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland 23.6.2014, 4.

⁶⁰ Karttunen, 25.6.2014.

⁶¹ Karttunen, 20.2.2015.

⁶² Archbishop Mäkinen to Hilarion unpublished available in Helsinki: Archives of the Foreign Office of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland 5.7.2014

⁶³ Mika KT Pajunen, *Raportti arkkipiispan delegaation vierailusta Moskovan patriarkaattiin 1.-3.9.2014*. unpublished available in Helsinki: Archives of the Foreign Office of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland

Finnish Lutheran Church to react more negatively to homosexuality and to condemn it as a sin.⁶⁴ The dialogues broke down.

After the breakdown of the dialogue, the ROC Metropolitan Hilarion stated, “Regrettably, the Finnish side has proved unprepared for discussing these issues in the language of theology rather than practical expediency.”⁶⁵ *Theological manner* seemed to mean, in this context, the relationship of theology, morality, and culture to each other. Moral norms and the condemnation of homosexuality as a sin were the reasons for the breakdown. Following the guideline from *On the External Mission of the Russian Orthodox Church Today*, the ROC seemed to have come to the conclusion that its dialogue partner took the path that led to the end of the dialogue—but not to the end of mutual relationships.

The ELCF evaluated the situation and made an Evaluation that reflected the Finnish understanding that indicated it was unable to approach dialogue preparation from an ecumenical starting point, as the ELCF’s “inner politics” played a role in the preparations.⁶⁶ This meant that differing understandings on homosexual relationships and the Christian understanding of marriage exist within the ELCF, and these viewpoints affected the way the ELCF discussed the issues with the ROC during the preparation process.⁶⁷ The Evaluation also pondered whether the ELCF’s habit of praying for same-sex couples would have been interpreted differently within the ROC if the ELCF had expressed its commitment to a traditional understanding of Christian marriage.⁶⁸ The Finnish evaluation of the situation shows that the ELCF, on one hand, had a clear idea that it would not determine homosexuality as a sin, but on the other hand, it hoped that it would have been able to

⁶⁴http://yle.fi/uutiset/venajan_ortodoksikirkko_perui_keskustelut_koska_suomen_luterilainen_kirkko_ei_tuominut_homoutta/7466866. Read 8.5.2015.

⁶⁵ <https://mospat.ru/en/2014/09/17/news108063/> Read 5.9.2015, See Karttunen 20.2.2015.

⁶⁶ Karttunen, 20.2.2015.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid. The idea gets support from Bishop Häkkinen’s visit to Moscow in February 2015. Häkkinen, *Raportti matkasta Moskovaan 15.2.–18.2.2015*, unpublished available in Helsinki: Archives of the Foreign Office of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, 3.

formulate its understanding more clearly from the point of view of marriage between man and woman—and handle the issue more “ecumenically.” The first claim was based on the doctrinal creation-based aspect of social ethics, whereas the latter one was based on the actual practice of the ELCF and its willingness to draw from the Lutheran heritage in an ecumenically fruitful way.

Churches’ understanding on basic Christian values and which values should be present in society were understood differently. Christians’ sincere concern was not directed towards common broad issues, but they obviously varied in concrete actions—thus a discussion on a theological basis could not be held. Therefore, no common results could be presented for multilateral ecumenism. The ELCF trusted its ecumenical orientation, whereas the ROC was faithful to its attitude towards the non-Orthodox.

6. Conclusions

The dialogue’s socioethical theme reviewed in this paper focused on those parts where the churches took a stand on the then prevailing socioethical questions. Documents of the ROC and the ELCF were used, where they described their attitude towards ecumenism. The author’s purpose was to find reasons, but not the whole explanation, and prove from the materials the argument that the dialogue between the ROC and the ELCF has ended and not just broken, though churches claim the latter. Analysis of the dialogue’s socioethical theme from the parts taken into this article showed that there occurred significant change and Christians’ sincere concern, politics, and multilateral ecumenical work were part of the reasons.

Christians’ as well as churches’ concern regarding the discussed topics were always a reason to talk about the chosen themes. However, it is possible to see that the way the

dialogue partners wanted to answer the acute issues discussed were no more as unanimous as in the beginning. This was due to fact that the discussion themes changed from global concerns to more local concerns and in the 2000s, towards questions on how a person's actions are seen to affect society and reflect the churches' teaching.

The change took place partly because of the changed political situation. During the 1970s and 1980s, the tension between the East and West caused the need to talk about peace – a global concern. Whereas the political situation changed particularly after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the churches were free to deliberate their position in their own countries, especially the ROC which needed to define its role in post-Soviet Russia. Thus the societal differences in Russia and Finland and the different ways of the Lutheran and Orthodox Church, which determined their Church-State relations, caused different answers to similar questions the churches faced. These differing answers seemed to also become contradictory, which was in connection with the way the work of the multilateral ecumenism was evaluated.

Multilateral ecumenism was seen as a good and reliable partner to refer to when concrete actions needed to be mentioned at the beginning of the dialogue. As the situation changed to such where socioethical issues were more local, multilateral ecumenism could no longer be the actor to refer to. The problems needed to be handled at the local level and bilateral dialogue offered an adequate platform to talk about the issues. However, this distanced the ROC-ELCF dialogue from the socioethical work of the WCC. It also meant that common concrete expressions on how the socioethical questions could be solved diminished though theological reasoning was formulated to show the common basis.

The ROC's ecumenical statement—referred to in the beginning of the article—revealed the reserved tone on ecumenism in the 2000s, which was seen to develop gradually in the dialogue with the ELCF as well. The statements spoke for such ecumenical dialogue where the ROC could witness its own teaching and where certain uniformity in actions with other

churches were demanded. This uniformity existed in the theses from 1970s and 1980s but disappeared after that when the socioethical questions up for discussion became even more local. The question of uniform actions or attitude toward practical question culminated then in the question of homosexuality. The ROC wanted the ELCF to completely share its attitude towards homosexuality. According to the ecumenical strategy of the ELCF, the theological deliberations would have been enough and desired a way to talk about specific socioethical issues. It wanted to find shared theological basis and did not put such heavy weight on differing practices. Promoting understanding between the ROC and ELCF on the basis of their solutions would have been the ELCF's wish. Therefore, discussion on the theological basis of anthropology was seen as valuable in the eyes of the ELCF, though reaching common understanding with the ROC was seen as almost impossible.

In order to continue the discussion—not necessarily within this specific dialogue—between the ROC and the ELCF, it would be beneficial to admit the very basic distinction between the ecumenical aims of these churches and even to say the dialogue has “ended” and not just “broken.” Communication between the churches has not disappeared and preparations for a common closed symposium on anthropology is under preparation. To admit that the dialogue ended in 2014 would enable the churches to set new openly expressed aims for the coming symposium and future coming discussions. If the symposium—which the ecumenical weight and outcome will not follow its earlier habit—is understood only as continuity of the old dialogue, the existing contradiction of the churches' aims might remain unsolved for long time.